(b) A State-lexel Illness Assistance Fund has been set up in Andhra Pradesh vide GO No. Ms. 123 dated 23-4-97.

(c) Govt. of A. P. had contributed a sum of Rs. 10 crores to this Fund in the year 1997-98. Accordingly, a sum of Rs. 5 crores (50% of the contribution made by the respective State, and the maximum grant-in-aid that can be released to a State in a year under the Scheme) was released vide this Ministry letter No. 7-41/97 F-II (NIAF) dated 31st March, 1998. Thereafter the Government of AP requested for a further release of Rs. 5 crores during March, 2001 stating that Govt. of AP had released a further sum of Rs. 2.5 crores to this fund in February, 2001.

(d) No further assistance could be realased as Govt. of AP have not furnished utilisation certificate and performance report for the earlier grant-in-aid released during 1998 and have also not furnished proof of deposit of further releases to Andhra Pradesh Illness Assistance Fund in a separate Bank account, which are essential pre-requisites for release of grants under this Scheme.

Developing Cure for Anthrax by JNU Scientists

1389. SHRI K. B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the US is leaning away from time-tested antibiotics like Cipro to other drugs for the treatment of Anthrax related hazards;

(b) whether a team of scientists from JNU has developed a cure for Anthrax related problems; and

(c) the preventive measures Government are taking to tackle chemical/ biological warfare?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. C. P. THAKUR): (a) Drugs for Anthrax are mainly antibiotics like Penicilin, Ciprofloxacine and Doxycycline. Each patient is treated according to the sensitivity of the organism to the anti-biotics.

(b) Yes, Sir. The preparation is yet to undergo animal/clinical trial.

(c) Government has taken following actions in the context of the present international scenario:

(i) A detailed list of biological agents used as weapons prepared by the Indian Council of Medical Research along with signs and symptoms, likely method of dissemination, incubation period, lethality and the availability

of vaccines, anti-microbial therapy and treatment has been circulated to Health Secretary and Director of Health Services of all States/UTs., and Central Govt. hospitals advising them to take following precautionary steps

Earmarking of maximum number of beds for emergency contingency

Stocking of vaccines/sera/drugs to the extent possible

Setting up a special team of doctors for coordinated action. They should be sensitized on the impact of such weapons and treatment measures.

(ii) Two expert group meetings were held (1st & 17th October) in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to review the management (diagnosis, treatment, I.E.C. activities etc.) of recently emerging diseases of public health importance like Dengue, Anthrax etc. Emincent experts in the field of medical science from different organizations in the country, senior officials of Ministry of Health & F.W. and chiefs of different Government and private hospitals in Delhi participated in the meeting and deliberated on various aspects of the bio-terrorism in the backdrop of the current global situation.

(iii) Two expert group meetings (18th and 21st October, 2001) were held to finalise guidelines to be issued in CD Alert.

(iv) National Institute of Communicable Diseases 22, Sham Nath Marg. Delhi-110054, an Institute under Directorate General of Health Services has been designated as the nodal agency for carrying out the tests of suspected Anthrax samples. A round the clock control room is functioning (Telephone Nos. 3912901) (between 10.00 A.M. to 6.00 P.M. & 3971875) (between 6.00 P.M. to 10.00 A.M.) to receive and test the suspected samples. Till the evening of 27th November, 2001. 322 suspected envelopes were received in the NICD for testing, 303 samples have already been tested, none was found positive.

(v) CD Alert, a monthly Newsletter of National Institute of Communicable Disesaes titled "Bioterrorism-Public Health system to Remain Alert" exclusively on Anthrax has been widely circulated. It has also been put in the Website of MOHFW (http://mohfw.nic.in) for information of general public.

(vi) Do's & Don'ts has already been published in the leading National Dailies regarding Anthrax.

(vii) A meeting-cum workshop on Biological & Chemical Terrorism was convened by the Department of Health on 29th October, 2001 in New Delhi wherein Health Secretary, Home Secretary and Director of Health Services from various States/UTs eminent experts in the field of medical science from different organizations in the country and heads of different hospitals in Govt. and private sector in Delhi participated and deliberated on various aspects. The representatives from the States informed the preparatory measures taken by them and assured availability of drugs in adequate quantity to tackle any situation.

(viii) Continuing Medical Education activities are being conducted in the Central Govt. hospitals in Delhi to sensitise the medical and paramedical personnel on biological terrorism.

(ix) The situation is being monitored.

Import of Ajinomoto

1390. SHRI K. B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Monosodium Glutamate (Ajinomoto) a taste enhancer is considered as a health hazard by US Federal Drug Administration and other European countries;

(b) whether Government still import and use a large quantity of Ajinomoto;

(c) whether Government had earlier contemplated banning the import/use Monoisodium Glutamate; and

(d) if so, why the proposal was shelved?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. C. P. THAKUR): (a) Monosodium Glutamate, a flavour enhancer is considered as a Safe Food additive by the Joint Expert Committee on Food Addditives of FAO/ WHO food standard programme.

(b) Government does not import or use Ajinomoto. But the import of Ajinomoto is free.

(c) and (d) According to Directorate General of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Commerce, the import of Monosodium Glutamate (Ajinomoto) is free and there was no proposal to ban the import during the last year.

The use of Monosodium Glutamate in foods is regulated by the provisions of Prevention of Food Adulteration Rules, 1955, according to which it may be